

9/13/26

Sermon Title: The Glory of the Transfiguration and the Way of Discipleship

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Matthew 17:1-13

The Transfiguration

¹ After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

⁴ Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.

⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid."

⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

¹⁰ The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

¹¹ Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things.

¹² But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."

¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

After hearing Peter's confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus told His disciples for the first time that He would go up to Jerusalem, suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and ultimately be put to death.

He then spoke to them about the cost and path of discipleship.

When the disciples heard these words, they were deeply discouraged.

They had followed Jesus all this time believing that He would become the King of the world.

They dreamed that, once He became king, each of them would have a position of honor and influence in His kingdom.

But now, instead of becoming a king, He was telling them that He would be put to death.

How could this possibly be?

To encourage these discouraged disciples, Jesus reveals more of His true identity to them.

He gives them a glimpse of His coming resurrection and the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven—a brief foretaste of the glory that was yet to come.

Jesus takes Peter, James, and his brother John with Him and leads them up a high mountain.

It was probably Mount Hermon, which was located near Caesarea Philippi.

¹After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

Matthew, the author of this Gospel, specifically notes that this event took place six days after Jesus had spoken about Peter's confession of faith, His coming suffering and death, and the judgment that was to come.

Why does Matthew go out of his way to mention that it was after six days?

After six days brings us to the seventh day, and the number seven represents victory and completeness, as well as rest and the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, the phrase “after six days” may carry the meaning that Jesus was opening up the threefold horizon of true rest, the glory of Heaven, and the Kingdom of God.

Of the twelve disciples, Jesus took only three with Him up the mountain: Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.

Whenever something important was about to take place, Jesus would specifically choose these three disciples to accompany Him.

Their selection was not necessarily based on any particular excellence or superiority in them, but on the sovereign will of Jesus.

Jesus was choosing them as the core members among the twelve and preparing them to take on the responsibility of leading and serving the church after His departure.

At the same time, He was giving them the privilege of witnessing His glorious transformation and entrusting them with the responsibility of proclaiming His glory to the world.

And there, on the mountain, Jesus revealed to these three disciples His glorious divine nature.

This was the moment when the disciples witnessed with their own eyes that the Jesus they had believed in and followed was truly God.

They saw Jesus’ face shine like the sun, and His clothes become as white as light.

² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

The disciples then saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus.

³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

Moses symbolizes the Law, and Elijah represents the prophets.

According to Jewish tradition, Moses and Elijah, along with Enoch, are regarded as figures who were taken up by God.

Jesus, too, would soon be taken up in glory after dying on the cross and rising again.

As Peter gazed upon the glorious appearance of Jesus, he was overwhelmed by the majesty of what he was seeing and, without even thinking, spontaneously spoke.

⁴ Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

Peter had witnessed countless miracles performed by Jesus throughout His ministry.

But what he was seeing now was something he had never witnessed before.

Peter was deeply moved by this extraordinary experience, and it led him to make a request of Jesus.

In making his request, Peter added the qualification, “if you wish,” thereby acknowledging Jesus’ authority.

Peter may have wanted to build shelters because he wanted this glorious manifestation and profound spiritual revelation to continue for as long as possible.

He may also have hoped that Jesus’ journey toward Jerusalem would be delayed, or perhaps even abandoned altogether.

Yet we cannot deny that Peter’s request came from a deeply fleshly and human way of thinking.

Peter still did not fully understand the path of suffering that Jesus had to take or the mission He had come to accomplish.

Jesus had to die on the cross in order to fulfill His ministry, but Peter did not understand this.

Instead, he wanted to remain in that glorious moment.

There were still many suffering souls down below the mountain who needed to be saved.

There was still a mission to accomplish.

Yet Peter was thinking only about his own desire for rest.

Peter did not understand that the glorious kingdom and true rest would come only after the Gospel had been proclaimed from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

This reveals just how ignorant Peter still was of the Lord's will and God's divine plan.

Then the three disciples experienced another mysterious and awe-inspiring moment.

God the Father, whose presence appeared in the cloud, affirmed and confirmed the identity of His beloved Son, Jesus.

⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

The words, "Listen to Him," mean that Jesus is greater than Moses, who gave the Law, and greater than Elijah, who represents all the prophets.

He is the Son of God and the true Messiah.

As disciples of Jesus, we must seek and depend upon the authority of Jesus Christ, our eternal King.

We must listen to His Word and obey Him.

The three disciples were already overwhelmed by the glorious sight of Jesus in His transformed appearance and by the majestic scene of Jesus speaking with Moses and Elijah.

Now, standing in the presence of God, they were filled with fear.

⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.

⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.”

⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

When Jesus touched the disciples and said, “get up, and do not be afraid,” He gave them a twofold command grounded in both love and divine authority.

This twofold command expresses the fullness of His salvation and the fullness of His love.

It also reveals that Jesus alone can remove the deepest fears that lie within the human heart.

Those who experience the glory of God come to realize that they are sinners and fall completely before Him in humility.

Like Isaiah, they cry out, “Woe is me! For I am lost.”

Like Peter, they fall before Him and say, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

And then the Lord comes near.

He reaches out His hand, touches them, and gently reassures them, saying, “get up, and do not be afraid.”

The disciples, who had been trembling with fear, regain their composure and look up at their Lord.

Moses and Elijah were gone, and Jesus alone was standing beside them, just as He normally did.

As they came down from the mountain, the Lord once again taught His disciples about the path of the cross.

Jesus told His disciples not to tell anyone about what they had just witnessed. He commanded them to speak about it only after He had died and risen again.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

Jesus gave them this command because, if they spoke about what they had seen at the wrong time, it could become an obstacle to the mission He had come to accomplish—the mission of walking the way of the cross.

At this point, the three disciples asked Jesus about the prophecy concerning Elijah. The scribes had taught that Elijah must come first before the Messiah appeared. So they were essentially asking Jesus, “If You are the Christ, then where is Elijah?”

¹⁰ The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

The scribes based their teaching on the prophecy of Malachi and insisted that Elijah would come first before the Messiah appeared.

Therefore, unless Elijah appeared, Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah would inevitably be called into question.

This is what the prophet Malachi said:

(Mal 3:1) “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple, and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.”

(Mal 4:5) “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.”

Jesus explains that Elijah had already come, but because the people were spiritually blind and ignorant, they failed to recognize him as the forerunner of the Messiah.

Instead, they rejected and persecuted him and ultimately put him to death.

Jesus then tells them that He, too, would walk that same path of suffering. Once again, Jesus was speaking to His disciples about His coming suffering and death on the cross.

¹¹ Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things.

¹² But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."

¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Only then did the disciples realize that Elijah was John the Baptist.

In the end, Jesus suffered and was put to death, just as He had foretold.

In place of Barabbas, a political prisoner who had been involved in rebellion and murder, Jesus was condemned as a rebel against Rome and crucified.

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray; each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on Jesus Christ the iniquity of us all."

Beloved members of Church of Godly Dreams,

On the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples witnessed the glorious splendor of Jesus.

They saw with their own eyes that Jesus was not merely a teacher or a prophet, but the Son of God and the true Messiah who had come to save the whole world.

Peter was so captivated by that radiant glory that he wanted to remain there.

But Jesus did not remain on the mountain of glory.

He went toward Jerusalem to take up the cross.

For there could be no resurrection glory without first passing through the suffering of the cross.

There were still souls waiting to be saved at the foot of the mountain.

There was still the cross He had to bear and the mission of the Gospel He had come to fulfill.

We, too, are often like Peter.

We want only the glory of the mountain, while trying to avoid the sacrifice of the cross down below.

But the true path of discipleship is not a path of enjoying glory alone.

It is the path of denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and quietly following the path Jesus walked, until at last we enter into glory.

We must remember that before Jesus asked us to walk this path, He Himself walked the way of the path first.

The world rejected and persecuted our Lord, but He faithfully fulfilled the mission entrusted to Him to the very end.

He shed His blood and died on the cross, making atonement for all our sins.

It was through His grace that we were finally saved and became children of God. Having received such great grace, we must live as people who have received and been transformed by that grace.

We, too, must live like Jesus, faithfully carrying out the mission entrusted to us to the very end.

Rather than pursuing our own interests and the glory of this world, we must live for the will and glory of God.

Even if that path is a path of suffering and the cross, do not become discouraged or lose heart.

Beyond the cross awaits the glory of the resurrection.

After the night of suffering has passed, the glorious morning of life will surely dawn.

Until that day, may you and I continue to trust in and look to Jesus Christ alone,
and walk courageously in the path of faith.
I bless you all in the name of Jesus Christ.